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Karingana Wa Karingana: Representations of the Heroic Female in Mozambique

Maria Tavares

O nacionalismo recorre à tradição como um elemento que transcende a vida dos indivíduos. No entanto, o nacionalismo também envolve um contínuo processo dinâmico em que os símbolos são constantemente recriados, e novos significados são atribuídos a eles, conforme as mutáveis circunstâncias através das quais a vida da comunidade se desenvolve.

(Montserrat Guibernau, *Nacionalismos*).¹

In the Ronga language of Mozambique, the expression *Karingana Wa Karingana* invokes a very specific oral practice in which the readers are called to listen to the stories about to be told. Hence, this tradition of storytelling around the fire, which brings together the eldest and the youngest to share knowledge and ensure its propagation from one generation to the other, directs the participants to a common and shared knowledge of memory, approximating them to a recognizable reality and experience and, therefore allowing them to imagine themselves as a community. In this sense, memory emerges as a privileged place for reflection on history and on what constitutes the collective imaginary through which the community will project itself. As elements that incorporate a sense of continuity and enable the consolidation of a common identity, heroic figures emerge as important constitutors of national identity.

According to Monserrat Guibernau, community conscience implies the use of certain symbols and rites, which individuals can identify and relate to and which

¹ “Nationalism resorts to tradition as an element which transcends the lives of individuals. Nonetheless, nationalism also entails a continuous dynamic process in which symbols are constantly recreated and new meanings are attributed to them, according to the changing circumstances through which the life of the community develops” (my translation).

simultaneously represent their unity, leading them to highlight the collective over the individual (Guibernau 1997, 91-4). When the author mentions ‘symbols’ she is actually referring to objects, signs or words. However, I believe that heroic figures can also be read as symbols, given that they invoke the history of the extended community, with episodes of their personal lives intersecting with and conditioning some of the nation’s historic moments that the population can relate to individually. By doing so, they are able to lead the people to bond through the sharing of a common experience and, consequently, to feel a sense of community. This successful intersection between the individual and the collective levels which is achieved through heroic figures not only allows the dissipation of differences in equality within the community, but also inspires the population to strive for the community’s continuity. In Guibernau’s words:

Eu diria que a nação, usando uma série particular de símbolos, mascara a diferenciação dentro de si mesma, transformando a realidade da diferença na aparência da similaridade, permitindo assim às pessoas se revestirem da «comunidade» com integridade ideológica. [...] As pessoas constroem a comunidade de uma forma simbólica e transformam-na como um referencial de sua identidade. (Guibernau 1997, 92)²

As a young nation-state with a solid pre-colonial tradition, a long colonial past and a post-independence socialist history, it is not surprising that Mozambique has produced so many heroic figures that are connected with the anticolonial, liberation struggle. As André Cristiano José reminds us, the process of construction of a national identity and the political and ideological imagination of the nation proposed by Frelimo coincided for a long time, evidencing the post-independence hegemonic role of the

² “I would say that using a particular set of symbols, the nation masks differentiation within itself, transforming the reality of difference into an appearance of similarity, and, thus, allowing people to incorporate the «community» with ideological integrity. [...] People construct the community in a symbolic way and they transform it as a referential of their own identity” (my translation).

Mozambican state (José 2008, 141-59). The construction of this national identity implied the creation and recreation of national symbols that would represent the *homem novo* [new man] that the state was inventing. Being a markedly masculine state, notwithstanding its openly socialist political emphasis on the emancipation of women in the public sphere, it produced many more male heroic figures than female (Eduardo Mondlane, Samora Machel, Marcelino dos Santos, Joaquim Chissano, Armando Guebuza, just to name a few).³ Considering the prominence and visibility of men within the imagination of the Mozambican nation, it becomes important to analyze representations of female heroism: who these women are, how they emerge in the cultural imagination of the country and how they project themselves in the debate over the contemporary national project.

To this end, two different types of texts will be used, both of which are quite recent and focus on two of the most important female characters in the history of the country: the freedom fighter Josina Machel and the athlete and Olympic gold medal winner Lurdes Mutola. One of the main icons of Mozambican women's emancipation, Josina Machel was the first wife of Samora Machel, Mozambique's first president, and a Frelimo fighter, well known for having dedicated her life to the Mozambican cause. Hence, her biography entitled *Josina Machel: ícone da emancipação da mulher moçambicana* [Josina Machel: icon of Mozambican women's emancipation], which was written by Renato Matusse and Josina Malique, and published in August 2008, will be

³ For an analysis of the treatment of "women" and the gender question within the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary discourses of the MPLA (Movimento para a Libertação de Angola) [Movement for the Liberation of Angola], in Angola, and FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) [Liberation Front of Mozambique], in Mozambique, see Catherine V. Scott's chapter, 'Contradictions in the Challenges to Dependency: The Roots of Counterrevolution in Southern Africa', in her *Gender and Development: Rethinking Modernization and Dependency Theory* (105-19). See also Hilary Owen's chapter, 'A Hybridity of One's Own: Rereading Noémia de Sousa', in her *Mother Africa, Father Marx: Women's Writing of Mozambique, 1948-2002* (43-105). Owen goes on to analyze the literary work of Noémia de Sousa so as to discuss the writing and rewriting of the role which was attributed to her as mother of the Mozambican literary nation and of *moçambicanidade* [Mozambicanness] (as opposed to José Craveirinha, who emerged as the father figure), as well as the male-oriented nature of anti-colonial nationalism.

analyzed alongside the short-story by Paulina Chiziane entitled “Mutola, a Ungida” [Mutola, the Chosen One], from the collection *As Andorinhas* [The Swallows]. Published in January 2009, the year in which homage was being paid to the father of the Mozambican revolution, Eduardo Mondlane, *As Andorinhas* is composed of three short-stories that focus on the stories of Ngungunhane, Eduardo Mondlane and Lurdes Mutola, simultaneously emphasizing their significant role in the shaping of a national identity. Chiziane’s revisiting of Mutola’s story in this context not only pays homage to her, but also enables her heroization. This discussion will therefore explore the processes of heroization undergone by Machel and Mutola, as well as their incorporation into the male-dominated list of national heroes, asking to what extent their representations enable us to understand how the questioning of feminine identity evolves and to open the debate on the paradigm of Mozambican national identity in contemporary Mozambique.

Given that the processes of heroization took place in two distinct historical settings, it is important to analyze them in their own contexts. As previously noted, during the post-independence socialist experience the identity of Mozambican women, as well as the struggle for women’s emancipation were inextricably linked with the univocal socialist discourse of the nation in which, according to Sonia Nhantumbo and Maria Paula Meneses, “assiste-se a uma proposta de emancipação e criação de um espaço da mulher, não pela aceitação da diferença mas pela masculinização da mulher” (Nhantumbo and Meneses 2005, 112).⁴ It is in this context that one of the main icons of Mozambican women’s emancipation, Josina Machel, emerges. According to her biography, she was one of the first members of Frelimo’s Destacamento Feminino [Female Detachment], the first Head of Department for Social Affairs and she died at

⁴ “There is a proposal of emancipation and the creation of a space for women that operate not through the acceptance of difference, but through the masculinization of women” (my translation).

the age of twenty five of a disease (Matusse and Malique 2008).⁵ The book provides us with a representation of Josina which is to a large extent based on accounts of some from the colleagues she worked and fought with, including Armando Guebuza, current president of both Frelimo and the Republic of Mozambique, who also wrote the book's preface. In this preface, Guebuza focuses on Josina's achievements throughout the liberation struggle, highlighting her devotion to this successful mission as the main reason for her to be considered an example to follow in the present day:

Ela legou à mulher moçambicana, e a todos nós, a grande lição que a emancipação da mulher realiza-se no quotidiano e através da sua participação em todas as frentes de luta, ontem contra a dominação estrangeira, hoje contra a pobreza. (Matusse and Malique 2008, viii)⁶

At this point, we are drawn to two important conclusions. The first is that in his identification of Josina as an icon for women's emancipation and the successful liberation struggle against colonialism, Guebuza and, by extension, the biography suggest that both are completed actions, i.e., women's emancipation emerges as something which has already been achieved successfully. The second conclusion is that women's representation as emancipated within a framework that seems to be informed by a Marxist-Leninist conceptualization is recycled and incorporated in the contemporary setting. It is worth mentioning that this book, which was originally launched in August 2008, was then re-launched in 2009 on April 7, Mozambican Women's Day, a public holiday that pays homage to Josina Machel, who died on that

⁵ In Nadjia Manghezi's chapter, "Com Josina" [With Josina], which is part of her biography of Janet Mondlane, entitled *O Meu Coração Está nas Mãos de Um Negro: Uma História da Vida de Janet Mondlane* [My Heart is in the Hands of a Black Man: A Story of Janet Mondlane's Life](301-21), Janet Mondlane states that in the aftermath of Josina's death she was told the cause had been pancreatic cancer or some similar disease.

⁶ "Her legacy to Mozambican women and to all of us is the important lesson that women's emancipation occurs in everyday life and through their participation in all fighting fronts, yesterday against foreign rule and today against poverty" (my translation).

day. It is important to emphasize the merit of a publication that gives visibility to a female hero in the male-dominated imagery of the nation. However, it is also imperative to bear in mind the convenience of celebrating a female hero who is represented as fully emancipated at a time when considerable controversy was raging over the bill on domestic violence against women (a bill that had been proposed by civil society in 2007 and was not passed by the Assembly of the Republic until July 21, 2009).⁷

The biography is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, entitled “A Infância e a Juventude” [Childhood and Youth], focuses on Josina’s genealogy, emphasizing the influence of her family in her choices and positioning, which reflects Frelimo’s own conception of the family as the primary cell of society. As Kathleen Sheldon points out in her extensive 2002 study entitled *Pounders of Grain: a History of Women, Work, and Politics in Mozambique*, this conceptualization resulted in the immediate emphasis of women’s roles as mothers and carers in the private sphere (Sheldon 2002, 117). Although they were allowed to be part of the public sphere, their participation was limited to areas generally associated with the domestic (such as education, care giving, health care) and their role in the private sphere was never questioned. In other words, the gendered division of labor remained undisturbed.

“O Adensar das Certezas” [The Strengthening of Certainty] is the title of the second chapter, in which Josina’s nationalist trajectory and her escape to become a Frelimo freedom fighter are observed. At this point, Josina’s courage, determination and

⁷ For an explanation of the bill on domestic violence against women and an examination of the polemics which emerged around its approval, consult the webpage of WLSA (Women and Law in Southern Africa), an NGO devoted to research on women’s rights in seven countries of southern Africa, including Mozambique: <http://www.wlsa.org.mz/>. See in particular the following articles: WLSA, “Proposta de lei contra a violência doméstica: ponto de situação” (Fevereiro de 2009); WLSA, “Deixando cair o véu: A violência doméstica contra as mulheres na comunicação social” (Fevereiro de 2009); Ximena Andrade, “Proposta de lei contra a violência doméstica: processo e fundamentos” (Março de 2009); Ana Maria Loforte, “Os movimentos sociais e a violência contra a mulher em Moçambique: marcos de um percurso” (Junho de 2009); Maria José Arthur, “Imprensa ataca aprovação da Lei da Violência Doméstica” (Julho de 2009).

resistance are described in a way that suggests that these are characteristics normally not to be found in women, as the following extract indicates:

“Em Março de 1964, Josina Muthemba foi detida em Victoria Falls pela polícia rodesiana e deportada para Moçambique. É de facto significativo que Josina, *como mulher*, nas mãos da PIDE, tenha mantido a sua verticalidade e frontalidade, não se intimidando nem mostrando sinais de qualquer tipo de arrependimento pela missão em que estava envolvida. Segundo Armando Emílio Guebuza, um dos primeiros nacionalistas moçambicanos e companheiro de Josina neste cativeiro, na vida política em Lourenço Marques e na Tanzania, ela terá dito aos agentes da PIDE, incluindo ao tenebroso Chico Feio, ... que ela fora detida a caminho da Tanzania onde ia ser treinada para libertar Moçambique”. (Matusse and Malique 2008, 45-46; my emphasis)⁸

Here, women’s emancipation is represented as their ability to prove that they are able to perform the same tasks as men.

Chapter Three of the biography is entitled “No Furacão da Libertação de Moçambique” [Inside the Hurricane of Mozambique’s Liberation] and it focuses on Josina’s emergence as a symbol of the struggle for women’s emancipation and as a martyr. It begins by telling us about Josina’s trajectory within Frelimo’s institutions, which gives us a panoramic view of the areas in which women were allowed to play a prominent role. In August 1965, Josina worked at the Instituto Moçambicano [Mozambican Institute], an internationally funded educational center for Mozambican

⁸ “In March 1964, Josina Muthemba was arrested in Victoria Falls by Rhodesian police and deported to Mozambique. It is, indeed, significant that Josina, *as a woman*, maintained her verticality and frontality while in the hands of PIDE, not allowing herself to be intimidated, nor demonstrating any signs of regret for being involved in such a mission. According to Armando Emílio Guebuza, one of the first nationalists and her mate in captivity, in Lourenço Marques’s political life and in Tanzania, she told PIDE agents, including the frightful Chico Feio, ... that she had been arrested while in her way to Tanzania, where she were to be trained in order to liberate Mozambique” (my translation; my emphasis). Matusse and Malique (2008) are here quoting Matusse and Bucuane (2003).

youngsters which was managed by Janet Mondlane. In June of the following year, LIFEMO (Liga Feminina de Moçambique) [Mozambique's Female League] was created. A particular feature of this organization was that, from the beginning, it assumed its independence from Frelimo, and this might have been one of the reasons why it became uncomfortable for Frelimo's leadership later on, eventually leading to the merging of LIFEMO and DF (Destacamento Feminino) [Female Detachment] in 1969. The DF was created with the intention of bringing together women who had undergone guerrilla training to join Frelimo's army. Josina did the three month practice and became actively engaged in the DF's tasks, which, according to Frelimo's definition, included the mobilization and education of the people, the defense of the liberated zones and participation in combat. However, as Sheldon points out, "the duties were heavily weighted toward women's military involvement, with only brief mention of the other support assignments for which women were responsible" (Sheldon 2002, 125). Josina had a key role in the DF's important programme of child care and social well-being, soon becoming the head of the Department for Social Matters, which was created to this end in 1969. Although the DF's agency was unquestionably decisive, again it pushed women into the exercise of specific tasks that were considered to be typical of their gender.

At this point, some information is provided regarding Josina and Samora Machel's marriage. In April 1969, at a meeting of the Defense Department, Samora announced to his male and female comrades that he intended to marry Josina and asked for their approval. The approval was consensual, but the comments of two participants at the meeting are worth highlighting here:

Nas suas intervenções os participantes falaram das qualidades deste futuro casal, não tendo colocado quaisquer objecções: "queremos, no entanto, ver o espírito

de trabalho a continuar e *ela [Josina] saber que a pessoa com quem se vai casar tem milhões de almas a seu cargo*”, sublinharia Dinis Moiane. Por seu turno, Marina Pachinuapa destacaria que o “o Camarada Samora sabe muito bem que Josina trabalha no Destacamento Feminino, portanto, *apelamos para a permitir participar* em todas as actividades”. (Matusse and Malique 2008, 123; my emphases)⁹

Moiane’s comment denotes a clear valorization of the public sphere over the private, given that the former is associated with the modern revolutionary mentality, whereas the latter is labeled obsolete. Furthermore, it deliberately devalues Josina’s work as Moiane emphasizes Samora’s position of leadership. Pachinuapa’s comment, meanwhile, necessarily implies that there is a structure of power in operation between genders, as she is *asking* Samora to *authorize* Josina to carry on working in the public sphere.

The last part of the chapter focuses on Josina’s complete devotion to the cause, as she brings together the roles of wife, mother and freedom fighter, and portrays her as a martyr who sacrificed herself for the sake of the nation. Despite being seriously ill, she carried on performing all her tasks, which involved heavy travelling throughout the country. She was twenty-five years old when she died on April 7, 1971, immediately becoming an icon for women’s emancipation and an example to be followed, as her colleagues would put it: “Josina *teve o discernimento* de pôr as necessidades da revolução acima das suas próprias, como o afirmam, em pranto, as suas amigas e

⁹ “In their interventions, the participants spoke about the qualities of this future couple, not posing any objections: «nonetheless, we want them to keep up the work spirit and *she [Josina] ought to know that the person who she is marrying is responsible for millions of souls*», highlighted Dinis Moiane. Marina Pachinuapa, in her turn, emphasized that «Comrade Samora is perfectly aware that Josina works for the Female Detachment. Therefore, *we call on him to allow her to participate* in all the activities” (my translation; my emphasis).

camaradas de luta, Marina Pachinuapa e Deolinda Guezimane” (Matusse and Malique 2008, 130; my emphasis).¹⁰

Finally, Chapter Four focuses on “O Legado e as homenagens a Josina Machel” [The Legacy and the tributes to Josina Machel], paying particular attention to Frelimo’s creation of various nurseries and the OMM (Organização da Mulher Moçambicana) [Mozambican Women’s Organization] in 1972. Assuming itself to be an institution which depended on Frelimo, OMM’s activities towards and struggle for women’s emancipation were carried out in accordance with the predefinitions of the Party. As both Isabel Casimiro and Kathleen Sheldon point out, as Frelimo’s spokespersons, the members of this organization regarded the emancipation of women and their integration in all levels of Mozambican life within a framework which was defined by the male-dominated socialist party. As a result, the OMM was a channel that linked both the party and the people, ensuring the application of Frelimo’s directives and never discussing gender-related issues, on their own specific terms, outside the constraints of the party’s Marxist-Leninist conceptualization (Casimiro 2005, 73-74). Inevitably, the OMM’s agency reflected the party’s contradictions in the representation of women within Mozambican society, which frequently translated into the reproduction of a more traditional social imaging of womanhood.

As we have observed so far, the reading of Machel’s biography reinstates these contradictions within the conceptualization of women’s emancipation in the ideological discourse of Frelimo. It is worth keeping in mind that these contradictions emerged from the relevance that women acquired in the negotiation of national unity, particularly after independence. Catherine Scott (1995) observes that the political elites who were

¹⁰ “Josina *had the good sense* to prioritize the needs of the revolution above her own, as confirmed in tears by her two friends and comrades in struggle Marina Pachinuapa and Deolinda Guezimane” (my translation; my emphasis).

responsible for these revolutionary discourses were quite aware of the fact that their maintenance of power depended on a negotiation with other social elites. As such, their discourse of unity would survive through the sacrifice of women, whose economic and class emancipation, so overtly emphasized throughout the anti-colonial conflict, would come to be deprioritized after independence. In Scott's words: "in this sense, both governments [the MPLA and Frelimo] have attempted to maintain political support by conceding the terrain of the household to male authority" (Scott 1995, 110). As a woman of her own time, Machel did not escape this logic of power. If this markedly politicized biography sets out to provide a very specific portrayal of Josina Machel, as the New Woman so highly praised by revolutionary discourse, the analysis afforded by Janet Mondlane's memories in her biography by Nadjia Manghezi, reveals, in contrast, a completely unknown Josina Machel, through the intimate perspective of someone who interacted with her in the private sphere – the area which had been marginalized by the modern discourse of the nation. In *O Meu Coração Está nas Mãos de Um Negro: Uma História da Vida de Janet Mondlane* [My Heart is in the Hands of a Black Man: A Story of Janet Mondlane's Life], by Nadjia Manghezi, a whole chapter is devoted to the friendship between Janet and Josina, which became particularly strong after the death of Eduardo Mondlane, given that they moved in together (Manghezi 1999, 301-21). It is through the words of Janet herself that we access the various stories of this private life that not only attest to the selective nature of the memory enshrined in revolutionary discourse, but also underline its duplicity, materialized in the intimate relationship between Samora and Josina.

Firstly, Janet remembers the polemic that emerged when Samora and Josina's marriage was announced:

Houve muito falatório sobre esse assunto. Porque o primeiro noivo dela tinha sido Filipe Magaia, que tinha sido morto, e o Samora tinha sido acusado de ter ficado com a posição do Filipe, como comandante do exército, e de ficar com a mulher dele. Houve muita gente que não engoliu muito bem aquilo. (Manghezi 1999, 307)¹¹

Although in Machel's biography the marriage is presented as having been unanimously accepted by the members of the Department of Defence and responsible for Josina's greater involvement in the struggle, this forgotten memory, which is here recuperated by Janet Mondlane, disrupts the image of perfect unification within Frelimo put forward by the biography (Matusse and Malique 2008, 120-23). Later, Janet recalls "incidents" that concerned the private life of the couple, given that after the wedding (at which she was the matron of honor) Samora also moved into the Mondlanes' home, where Josina had already been living, along with Janet, since Eduardo Mondlane's death. The first incident occurred in the aftermath of the wedding. According to Janet, before they got married, Samora had asked Josina to make a list of all her former boyfriends claiming that he was taking precautions, in a war situation, against any possibility of trouble from jealous ex-boyfriends. Josina wrote the list, excluding one single name from it. However, Samora was later able to obtain the missing information. After he confronted her, their relationship suffered a major reversal, which led Janet to reflect upon the matter and even to interfere:

Na verdade eu achava que o Samora estava a ser extraordinariamente estúpido.

A Josina tratava-o muito bem. Quando ele entrava em casa ela ajoelhava-se, tirava-lhe os sapatos e as peúgas e trazia-lhe os chinelos. Todo esse tipo de

¹¹ "There was a lot of gossip on the matter. Because her first fiancé was Filipe Magaia, who had been murdered, and Samora was accused of taking Filipe's position, as the army's commander, and of taking his wife. There were a lot of people who didn't approve of that" (my translation).

coisas. Ela era muito servil com o Samora. É claro que isso era ao que ele estava habituado. Foi-se tornando cada vez pior quando ele se tornou comandante do exército e, depois, dirigente da FRELIMO. Oh, céus. Mas ela agia dessa forma. (Manghezi 1999, 313)¹²

Faced with this situation, Janet felt compelled to interfere and confronted Samora angrily. According to Janet, he was ‘amused’ by her interference in his marital life (Manghezi 1999, 314). Nonetheless, he accepted the criticism, because he “gostava de mim mas, mais do que isso, ele respeitava o Eduardo e *eu era a viúva do Eduardo*” (Manghezi 1999, 314; my emphasis).¹³ The second incident took place during a journey that Janet and Josina made to Mozambique as part of a big group. While bathing at one of the camping sites where they had stopped, Josina lost her wedding ring, which led her to panic, as she did not know how to explain it to her husband:

A aliança caiu-lhe do dedo e ela não deu por isso. [...] Passámos alguns maus momentos e, portanto, regressámos ao sítio e acabámos por a encontrar, encontrámos a aliança, o que foi uma vitória. A Josina estava realmente cheia de medo. Estava cheia de medo porque, se tivesse perdido a aliança, ia ter de contar isso ao marido e não era coisa fácil. (Manghezi 1999, 315)¹⁴

If it is true that any spouse – husband or wife – would panic over the loss of a wedding ring in these circumstances, it is also true that this particular incident takes on a different

¹² “In reality, I thought Samora was being incredibly stupid. Josina treated him very well. When he entered the house, she would kneel, take off his shoes and socks and bring him his slippers, and all that kind of things. She was very subservient towards Samora. Obviously, he was used to this kind of behavior. The situation increasingly worsened when he became the army’s commander and, later on, the Head of Frelimo. Oh, goodness. But, she would just act like that” (my translation).

¹³ “[He] liked me but, above all, he respected Eduardo and *I was Eduardo’s widow*” (my translation; my emphasis).

¹⁴ “The wedding ring slipped through her finger and she did not notice it. [...] We went through some harsh moments and, therefore, went back to the previous location and ended up finding it; we found the wedding ring, which was a victory. Josina was really frightened. She was scared because, had she lost her wedding ring, she would have had to tell her husband about it, and that would not have been an easy thing to do” (my translation).

dimension when it is considered alongside the one previously described. There is a suggestion that Josina was afraid of what Samora might read into this particular incident, especially considering their major fall-out, after their wedding, over the fact that she had willfully omitted the name of one of her ex-boyfriends from the list that he had requested from her. On the one hand, Josina's omission appears to challenge Samora's wishes – he was a man who, according to Janet Mondlane, enjoyed being served and expected his wishes to be attended to –, revealing an image of her that conflicts somewhat with Janet Mondlane's more subservient representation of her. On the other hand, Samora's behavior and expectations towards his new wife appear to be based on predefined traditional gender roles, acknowledged by both spouses, which, in this context, make Josina's behavior appear defiant.

As such, the reading of these incidents ultimately demonstrates that domestic space remained the realm of unquestioned male authority. It is inside this space that the contradictions of the revolutionary discourse are projected, given that women's emancipation does not reach this territory, where the very concepts of gender that Frelimo claimed to be fighting against, were being reproduced. This small insight into scenes from the private life of two of the greatest representatives of the revolutionary discourse reveals that gendered power structures were indeed being kept alive, since women, with their behavior under constant surveillance, had to act as representatives of both an identity continuum (through preservation of their traditional roles within the patriarchal family structure, in which they existed only in relation to the patriarch) and a modern nation, that projects itself into the future (through their emancipation in the public sphere). In this context, it comes as no surprise that the biography of Janet Mondlane – someone who was so close to Josina Machel – is not even referenced in the biography of Josina Machel which is under analysis here.

Nevertheless, Josina's biography ends on a happy note, presenting pictures of members of the DF paying homage to her on Mozambican Women's day and presenting Josina's dream of women's emancipation as a completed project, i.e., as something which has already been successfully achieved. Hence, Josina's crystallization as the mother of the nation and, simultaneously, as an emancipated woman not only represents the heroic female according to traditional conceptualizations of womanhood, it also naturalizes it. This naturalization becomes even more significant when we analyze it within the context of the contemporary debates over gender equality and power relations between genders that are taking place in the Mozambican social arena, such as the bill on domestic violence against women, the feminization of poverty, or even the trafficking of women in the context of the 2010 World Cup, in South Africa.¹⁵ These debates show that women continue to struggle for the deconstruction of female uniformity, for the rewriting of gender roles, for the reformulation of gender relations, and for gender equality.

The heroization of the international athletics star Maria de Lurdes Mutola emerges in counterpoint to the heroic female represented by Josina Machel. Her trajectory completely disrupts both the traditional conception of womanhood and the socialist representation of feminine emancipation. Born to a humble family from Maputo in October 1972, Mutola demonstrated huge sporting talent from the beginning, initially achieving high visibility precisely in the male-dominated field of football. The social upheaval caused by a woman playing on a male football team proved to be insurmountable, however, and she ended up having to quit the team and change sports. With the help of the Mozambican poet José Craveirinha, she then started to practice

¹⁵ See WLSA, 'Tráfico de Mulheres & Mundial de Futebol 2010: risco de aumento da exploração sexual ligada ao tráfico' in <http://www.wlsa.org.mz/>.

athletics and her talent was soon recognized when she won a scholarship that enabled her to go to the United States to continue her training and her studies. She went on to win a host of international competitions, a major highlight being the gold medal for the 800 meters at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Her achievements, as well as her successful projection of Mozambique in the international arena made her a national symbol, recognized and praised by all Mozambicans.

Mutola's heroization, which has taken various public forms in Mozambique (there are two streets in Mozambique named after her; the primary school she attended and the sports pavilion of the Clube Desportivo de Maputo [Maputo Sports Club] have also been renamed after her), has been celebrated by the Mozambican author Paulina Chiziane in her literary work "As Andorinhas" [The Swallows], published in January 2009, the year the Mozambican government officially dedicated to Eduardo Mondlane (Nunes 2008, 161-62). "As Andorinhas" is a collection of three short-stories that explore the trajectories of Ngungunhane, Eduardo Mondlane and Lurdes Mutola. The selection of these three subjects who lived through different periods of Mozambican history in precise chronological order suggests a clear idea of continuity and evolution in Mozambican history and national identity. Furthermore, the heroization of Mutola, whose visibility does not have any political or military background, along with two male heroes who emerge as intimately connected with the anti-colonial struggle is quite revealing. By doing this, Chiziane presents Mozambican identity as a continuous entity that recognizes its own past, but simultaneously projects itself into the future, thus enabling the emergence of Mutola as the contemporary hero who not only updates the imagination of the national hero, but also subverts the conceptualization of female heroism by representing a different possible image. As a symbol that speaks to the community, she materializes the dissociation between national identity and political

project, thereby opening the process of national identity construction up to a multiplicity of experiences.

The short-story about Mutola, which is entitled “Mutola, a Ungida” [Mutola, the Chosen One] and follows the story dedicated to Eduardo Mondlane, starts precisely

with a little tale that, as the book informs us, Eduardo Mondlane used to tell. It is the story of an eagle that was raised to be a chicken but never denies its nature as a free bird and, eventually, ends up escaping and spreading its wings towards the sun (Chiziane 2009, 73-74). The connection between Mondlane and Mutola which is suggested by the story promotes an identity continuum, especially if we take into consideration the life trajectories of both of them (both left Mozambique to go to US and improve their careers, yet they returned to their homeland and made an important contribution to the nation). It also proposes the acceptance and recognition of a legacy that is to be taken a step further in a different context presenting new challenges. As the story unfolds, it shows how Mutola’s childhood was deeply marked by the *habitus* that defined genders.¹⁶ She learned how to occupy the space which was devoted to women within the private and domestic sphere, as well as the roles she was meant to perform in this space. However, from an early age her love of sports led her to subvert predefinitions such as these. By joining the Águia D’Ouro male football team, Mutola reopened the debate on gender in civil society. Not only was she extrapolating from and deconstructing the limits of her gender, but she was simultaneously questioning

¹⁶ Habitus is here understood according to its conceptualization by Pierre Bourdieu: “The habitus is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions; it is a general, transposable disposition, which carries out a systematic, universal application – beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt – of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions. ... Because different conditions of existence produce different habitus – systems of generative schemes applicable, by simple transfer, to the most varied areas of practice – the practices engendered by the different habitus appear as systematic configurations of properties expressing the differences objectively inscribed in conditions of existence in the form of systems of differential deviations which, when perceived by agents endowed with the schemes of perception and appreciation necessary in order to identify, interpret and evaluate their pertinent features, function as life-styles” (Pierre Bourdieu 1984; 2010, 166).

masculinity, thus revealing it to be no less socially constructed and exposing the structures of power in operation between genders:

O golo extraordinário foi marcado por uma mulher que nem parece mulher, aquilo parece golo de homem mesmo, é espantoso, as mulheres não percebem nada de futebol e nem sabem jogar! Foi extraordinário! Esta mulher vibrou, brilhou, mostrou o que valia, parecia até uma águia no meio de galinhas!...

O desconforto tomou conta da equipe. (...) Desconforto sentiram também os treinadores e os adeptos. Ser superado por uma mulher é uma grave afronta!

Inadmissível! Simplesmente inaceitável! (Chiziane 2009, 76)¹⁷

Mozambican society's inability to deal with the challenge posed by Mutola led to her dismissal from the team and her joining the athletics team instead. Although the gender issue remained apparently undisturbed, the Mutola case brought into the open the need to dismantle women's traditional representation and to discuss and rethink gender. Furthermore, her own life trajectory enabled her to successfully legitimize a new representation of women, thus proposing an alternative conceptualization of female heroes. At the age of thirty-seven, the athlete had never married, did not have any children and lived on her own at her home in Johannesburg. Although she intends to build a family in the future (with her current boyfriend), she states that she will go at her "own pace" and will only think of doing it when she has stopped competing.¹⁸

¹⁷ "The extraordinary goal was scored by a woman who does not even look like a woman; that really looks like a man's goal, it is amazing, because women do not know a thing about football and they do not even know how to play it! It was extraordinary! This woman vibrated, shone, and showed what she was made of, just like an eagle amongst chicken!... The team was taken by discomfort. (...) Discomfort was also felt by managers and supporters. To be outperformed by a woman is a serious affront! Intolerable! Simply unacceptable!" (my translation).

¹⁸ "No passado pensa várias vezes em formar a sua própria família, mas tal não passa de um pensamento. '[...] Toda a gente tem essa fase. Quando se está bem na vida toda a gente pensa em casar e ter filhos. Em África há muito a ideia de que, quando se tem dinheiro, deve ter-se filhos, mas quando se vive num ritmo próprio, pensa-se de outra forma. Quis pensar primeiro na minha carreira e deixar isso para o futuro'" [In the past she thought many times about building her own family, but that was just a thought. 'Everybody

In the text, rather than heroizing Mutola as the descendant of Eduardo Mondlane and the person responsible for continuing his work, Chiziane praises her as an alternative, disruptive, provocative and successful female ideal:

No voo sereno, a menina questiona a ordem das coisas. Porque é que as mulheres sempre esperam, se têm forças para desafiar o destino? E se o príncipe esperado não chegar, quem pagará a despesa da eterna frustração? Resistindo às falácias, ela abre os caminhos de glória. (Chiziane 2009, 76)¹⁹

In doing this, she simultaneously proposes an alternative imagination of the female hero that opens up the conceptualization of heroism (hitherto openly marked by military and party experiences) to myriad experiences that go beyond the limits of the official cultural discourse. Finally, her many international achievements as an athlete that successfully brought Mozambique to the attention of the world for positive reasons enabled her to project an image of *moçambicanidade* [Mozambicanness] and even of citizenship (as she always refused to acquire any other nationality and give up her Mozambican passport) that refute any essentialist or exotic portrayal in the era of

goes through that phase. When one has a stable life, one always thinks about getting married and having kids. In Africa there is this established idea that if you have enough money, you should have children, but when you have your own pace, you think differently. I wanted to focus on my career first and leave that for the future” (my translation) (Nunes 2008, 192).

¹⁹ “In her serene flight, the girl questions the order of things. Why do women always wait if they are strong enough to challenge destiny? What if the long awaited prince does not arrive? Who will pay for the expenses of eternal frustration? Resisting the fallacies, she opens the pathways of glory” (my translation). A poem that the late Mozambican artist Malangatana wrote in homage to Mutola is worth reproducing here. This poem appears in the dedications written to the athlete in her biography: “Faz hoje qualquer ano, mas no fim dum milénio/ que Lurdes Mutola nasceste fugiste meu amor do lobolo/ deixando bocas escancaradas e mãos abertas, e/ ancas apostas para um bailado que não aconteceu/ o lobolo nunca aconteceu/ cedo fugiste das tradições dos costumes/ os mikulungwana e swibubutwana/ soam sim porque às outras Lurdes/ Que sem lobolo espantam o mundo/ e nós prostramos diante de ti/ porque nenhum Parabéns é suficiente” [It has been any year today, but at the end of a millennium/ since you, Lurdes Mutola, were born and escaped, my love, the dowry/ leaving open mouths and empty hands behind, and/ also hips which were ready for a dance that never took place/ the dowry never took place/ you escaped traditions and costumes very early/ the mikulungwana and swibubutwana/ sound because they are directed at the other Lurdes/ who amaze the world without dowries/ and we kneel before you/ because no congratulatory words are quite enough” (my translation. Mikulungwana and swibubutwana are two different kinds of cries which are used at the high points of celebrations to express extreme happiness. They very commonly occur in occasions such as weddings, for example.) (Nunes 2008, 267).

globalization. Viewed in this light, the importance of her contribution to the construction of Mozambican identity is unquestionable.

It is important, in conclusion, to distinguish and praise the work that Renato Matusse, Josina Malique and Paulina Chiziane do in recovering memory and affording visibility to the heroism of both Josina Machel and Lurdes Mutola in the male-dominated panorama of national heroes. Both of these women made a significant contribution to the construction of the Mozambican nation, national identity and the struggle to rewrite gender roles in Mozambique. Nevertheless, their struggles have to be understood in the specific context in which they took place. The representation of Josina Machel as a female hero who is an emancipated women has to be read in the political and ideological context in which she lived, with all the limitations that this emancipation entailed. The heroization of Lurdes Mutola shows precisely that there are alternative forms of female heroism and that the rewriting of gender is still a work in progress.

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